

HJR 20 STUDY: HEALTH CARE PRICE TRANSPARENCY
Panel Discussion: Consumer Views on Transparency in Pricing
Presented by: Gary Lusin – Bozeman

Questions:

1. Consumers want a system they can trust. They don't understand why it is so complicated to get the cost of different services. They want clear and understandable information on what a procedure, medication, or visit actually costs (the charge) and what the insurance will pay and what they will have to pay.

They want stability and accountability. No game playing, be factual, and truthful about the cost of care.

They expect hospitals, providers, insurers, and pharma to cooperate and take action to get the right information they need regarding price, as well as quality of care.

They want their voices heard loud and clear but they feel they do not have that ability to do that and that the major influential entities are not listening. What other options are available, such as social media, to get consumers connected and engaged?

They expect transparency about the referral process and who they are being referred to and if there is a financial connection between those entities that could influence the decision of the referring provider to refer them to another provider, more for money than quality care.

Consumers want to understand and see the devils in the details behind what is driving the costs. Simply showing the costs does not tell us what is driving those costs. Are there factors driving the costs that should be exposed and made transparent to determine if they are valid and can they be eliminated because they are not necessary, except to produce more revenue for the entity.

Consumers feel that the care they receive in an outpatient as well as inpatient setting is overall good. There are issues in each setting that could use some change and which the issue of transparency, with good data, could help expose areas that need change to allow consumers to better manage their costs of care.

2. Consumers are confused about this as they don't see the complexity of being told prices of simple tests and procedures, being handed a piece of paper with the prices of the items they will be paying for. They don't expect exact dollar amounts, but at least a good range of what the item may cost.

They feel this information can be provided on a piece of paper. Any website or online information needs to be revealed to healthcare consumers, easily and readily available and easy to understand and make sense of, and they need to trust that information.

6. Surprise bills are often intentionally generated by the facility as they do not want the patient to know about a service up front, and that it will cost them. This is a significant issue with transparency, there should be no surprises, but consumers also recognize that there are certain situations, such as in emergency situations, where there may be unanticipated services provided that are a surprise later on. With this in mind, systems can be changed to minimize this.

7. The transparency tools available are not helpful because the people supplying the information or putting the information/site together do not want it to be clear and factual. There are many articles on the fact that hospitals and physicians are the main resistors to transparency. Consumers want this stopped. Consumers also express that the responsibility is not only on hospitals and providers, but also on insurance companies and pharma. They want clear and trustworthy information from all entities about the cost.

To put an effort into pricing transparency that appears to be good, but in the end does not provide the information in the context consumers find helpful will continue to exacerbate the problems that consumers are experiencing due to the continued lack of transparency.

More consumer voices have to be at the table. The whole issue of health care in general and specifically in transparency needs to be constructed to meet consumer/patient needs, not the needs of the major special interests. *ALL* stakeholders, including consumers, have to be involved. For years, consumers have not been included, and look where we are.

You must invite consumers to be more involved, educated, and engaged in focused discussions to guide policy changes in a way that can provide a better health care system for everyone.